

Changes of the Sword

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By Kyle Emmerson

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People oft wonder about me. The way I dress, the way I act, the way I speak.

Gods, even I wonder about myself. I wasn't always like this. I was once a normal boy. I had the desires of the normal boy. I wanted the newest toy on the market. I wanted to be the first on my block. I played video games, I even had friends.

And then, it happened. It was so sudden that it didn't start taking its effect upon me for some time. Nearly a month.

The death of my mother hit my father first. He was silent for weeks, not speaking a word. And then suddenly, he was gone. I had returned from school to find that he had left for Hawaii, leaving my sister and I in the care of the servants.

My sister was the second casualty. I saw a change in her as I'd never seen. She used to be a pleasant girl. Fighting over the affections of boys in her class, drawing pretty hearts on her schoolwork.

But soon, she drew roses. Not red or pink, as one would expect from a girl, but black. Black roses, as dark as the night. It took her two months for her personality to make the transition from a sweet,

twelve year old school girl, to the Black Rose. What was before a mere hobby then became her life.

She had always enjoyed gymnastics. It often pleased me to watch her practice her routine. To smile with pride as she successfully completed a complicated manuevre, and to laugh boyishly when she would fall down.

It soon became torture. She started to live her hobby. Her gymnastics were everything, and she would stop at nothing to win. I've often been frightened of her taking things to far, even to the point of injury, or death.

I could never pinpoint the exact moment she turned that cold, from such a warm, caring individual. I could never understand why she turned. When she started regarding me with silence, and wearing a leotard under her school uniform daily, I left in search of my own resolution.

It was around that time when I realized the friends I had, the ones I played with daily. My friends who would cheer me up when I was sad, and be happy when I was happy were no longer with me.

They hadn't left. Not in the physical sense, but they were gone from me. I had pushed them away after the death of my mother, when I didn't even realize what I was doing.

There was nothing for me any longer. I had to keep ahold of my sanity for as long as I could.

And so, Tatchi Kuno, at age fourteen, became Tatewaki Kuno, rising star of the Kendo world.

Kendo soon became my life, as Gymnastics had with my sister. Of course, I had never let it progress so far in my mind as she had. I could still hold on to some of my sanity.

I say some. Yes, I know I am not completely sane. No man is, but I more than others.

I was sixteen when I met Akane Tendo. It had been my first year at Furinkan High, and Akane was taking a tour with students from her Junior High School. I had introduced myself to her. She seemed disinterested at first, but I kept on her.

Akane, I remember how beautiful she was with her long hair. How it bounced with her as she ran. Her gracefullness as she fought off the hordes of students fighting for her affection.

I realized what I had done. But I believed my affections for her would overcome that. I was wrong.

It was soon after my second year at Furinkan, that he arrived. The 'demon'. Ranma Saotome. I wish I could have seen him for what he really was at the beginning, but I was too blinded. Both by Akane Tendo, and soon later, the pig-tailed girl.

I see now what he is though. Ranma Saotome is no demon. He is an honourable man, willing to fight for what he believes in.

And he doesn't like me.

That isn't completely true, I suppose. I think he harboured some feelings of friendship. How he helped me when my sister had stolen my 'album'. When he cheered for me when Mariko was expressing her affections.

Had I known he was the pig-tailed girl from the beginning, a friendship could have been salvaged. But now, after all I've done to him, it's impossible. There is always the chance of acquaintances, but no more than that.

Ranma Saotome sees me as an annoyance.

As does Akane Tendo.

They see me as more than that now.

I look back upon the last few years of my life, and I feel helpless. There is nothing I can change. When I had the chance to change something, I did not. Call it fear, call it insanity rising from the quarries of my soul, but I gave up the chance. The wishing sword. And all I had to show for it was a simple date with a MAN.

It took me a long time to realize it. Ranma Saotome and the pig-tailed girl were the same person. It happened shortly after the first failed wedding. After coming home triumphant from stopping the wedding, I had retired to my chamber. The next morning, I was dead-set to teach Ranma Saotome a lesson.

I was so dead-set, that I brought my katana.

That day was the worst of my life.

That was the day of my dishonour. The day that led up to this one.

If I had not been so blind to see that I had caused the wound upon Akane's arm myself, I could have saved dishonour. Not all of it, but most. For it was what I had done next that had ruined everything.

I was blind with rage. I had truly believed in my heart that Ranma had caused the wound as retaliation for what had happened the day before.

I attacked. I attacked with rage and fury as I've never had before.

And Ranma was good enough to block, but luck may smile upon anyone. And it did upon me. The negative luck, for both parties.

The sword cut deep into his stomach. It had missed all major organs, thankfully. He would live, but the scar would always be there. Weeks after the incident, he would be as active as he was the day before, with all the ability plus even more.

But there was still the scar. The scar *I* had caused. The sword *I* plunged into him. The dishonour *I* had brought upon myself.

And then he had fallen into the pool. He staggered there, with the

blood pouring from him. And then I had seen. And then I had understood.

It was after I had confirmation that he would live that I left, never to see them again.

And it leads up to this day. The day that I kneel here, in my family dojo. My pen in hand, my tanto before me, and my sister behind.

And now it happens. Now I save the name of the Kuno family, and now I take that which should never have existed in the first place.

Now is the day that all shall find out. Tatewaki Kuno never existed. Nor did Tatchi Kuno, the carefree youth.

The Black Rose may one day find herself in my position. Who would mediate, I wonder? Perhaps father. No. He wouldn't. His mind has long since been lost.

It matters not now.

I pick up the tanto and ready myself before the family altar.

I can hear my sister behind me. Her breathing seems laboured, but she knows what to do after I've done what must be.

I place the tanto to my stomach. I can feel the tears of helplessness streaming from my eyes. I can feel my gut clenching in disgust at what is about to happen.

But there is something else. Butterflies? Am I nervous to soon be joining the afterdeath? What does it matter. I strengthen my arms and look towards the altar.

And in one swift movement, it is done. I can feel the warmth spreading out against my lower half as it seeps out from inside of me. I can feel... body parts escaping from the bloody hole I had made.

Intestines. I am holding my intestines.

It doesn't hurt. I cry loudly, but I feel no physical pain. But I want it to be over. Gods, I want it to be over. My sister should have finished it by this time.

I look back briefly. I see my sister, her eyes streaming with tears. For a brief moment, I could see Kodachi. Not the Black Rose, but Kodachi. My real sister. The one that had died years ago.

She then looked at me, and she said something. I could hear nothing over the sound of my own heart, but she said something. Something of meaning.

And then she clenched the sword, and pulled it up. She closed her eyes tightly, and then swung in a wide arc.

Though I could feel the pain as the katana entered my neck, it didn't matter. It was over. Tatewaki Kuno was no more, nor had he ever been. The honour of the Kuno family was saved. For now.

And I look back upon my life, and I cry. I look back upon myself, my dead body lying on the floor of my family dojo, and I smile. I smile, content in the knowledge that my dishonour has been repayed. My dishonour would never again resurface.

And I look before me, hanging in limbo in the afterdeath. I see roads to take, and tracks to cover.

I sit in wait for a resolution that would never come. For the fates to tell me, 'Tatewaki, you have served your purpose.' But it won't happen. I know. I know now, and I knew then.

I could have been different. I could have been a friend. I could have been an ally. I could have been loved by someone.

But now, I sit. Loved by no one. I sit in the dark, and can do nothing but contemplate.

I sit for eternity, only wondering what could have been different.

But nothing changes.

End
file.